

A close-up photograph of a pink lily flower. The petals are a vibrant pink color with dark spots. In the foreground, a stamen is prominently displayed, showing its brown, textured anther and a small, dark, three-lobed structure at its base. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the flower's details.

The Scent of Your Garden Fragrant Perennials and Bulbs

G. Edwin Varner

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THE SCENT OF YOUR GARDEN: FRAGRANT PERENNIALS AND BULBS

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Written by G. Edwin Varner.

Preface

This guide helps you learn and discover beautiful perennial flowering plants providing delightful fragrances for your flower garden. In this ebook, I have enjoyed smelling the following flowers for their various fragrances. Please understand the sense of smell is different for each person and results may vary.

This ebook is not the definitive listing of all these types of plants.

The information on each plant may contain inaccuracies about their histories, growing conditions, and hardiness. Each plant has its USDA hardiness zones, best growth conditions, and my recommended varieties to find and grow. Please be aware these plants may not be available, discontinued or replaced for better varieties by nurseries.

The following plants use their Latin name first then by a common name or names.

The digital photos are of the flowers at my home, public gardens, many nurseries within my area and by Creative Commons (CC0) licensed images.

Introduction

Tastes like chicken.

Chicken? Sorry, it's an old joke. Here it should read "smells like Easter lilies." You would be surprised how many fragrant flowers have an Easter lily perfume. Which begs the question – which ones? We will eventually find out.

While some perennial plants have easy to identify floral scents some have unique fragrances. The purpose of this ebook is to help you find some common, but also rare types of perennial flowers and bulbs that provide a noticeable aroma for your garden.

The following plants vary in hardiness, but that should not limit you from trying ones 'a little' outside their comfort zone. You can always give them some extra loving care to help survive for many years to come.

I hope this publication helps you discover some beautiful and fragrant flowers and plants to grow and enjoy in your garden.

To find plants, bulbs or seeds of the following species and varieties, please visit your nearby larger garden centers or search online to find specialty nurseries that grow and sell them.

Agastache - Hummingbird Mint

Agastache aurantiaca



No, it isn't a mirage.

These beautiful semi-woody perennials originate from the desert environment of southwestern North America. They are becoming popular plants each year due to their tremendous flower production,

long blooming, and exciting colors. They also attract hummingbirds and butterflies by the million. Well, not precisely but close!

They have flowers resembling those of Salvia with long drawn out petals. The exhilarating licorice or peppermint fragrance is from the leaves and stems. Most varieties bloom from midsummer to fall.

Summer Breeze is a recommended representative variety for your garden. It has breathtaking color blends of pink, rose, pale orange and peach. When the sun shines through the petals, they glow like hot embers. All those colors can be mesmerizing. It is an ever-blooming bushy variety and grows over three feet tall.

Place the plants in plenty of sunshine and well-drained soil. Since they are of a desert heritage, they tolerate drier soil longer than most other perennials. Most varieties are hardy from zones 6 to 10.

Aquilegia – Columbine

Aquilegia chrysantha and *A. fragrans*



Letting your imagination get the better of you.

The common name for this beautiful perennial is “Granny’s Bonnets” for the flower, as a whole, resembles those old-fashion lady pioneer hats. The botanical Latin name is from the words aqua (meaning water), and ‘legere,’ to collect. Water-carrier is a reference to the drops of nectar found in the extension ends (called spurs) of the petals. Impatiens flowers also have noticeable spurs. This plant has a lot of imagination going for it!

They grow in full to partial sunlight but need to have consistently moist soil. They make excellent rock garden and border plants which the

newly arriving hummingbirds find the flowers irresistible.

Columbines bloom during the spring and extend into early summer, but most do not have a fragrance. The species, *Aquilegia fragrans* has pale blue to pure white blossoms exuding a terrific sweet perfume. A fragrant variety of *Aquilegia chrysantha* includes **Yellow Queen**, having bright buttercup yellow petals and a sweet lily perfume. **Perfumed Garden Mix** has a variety of colors all having a fresh, sweet aroma.

A few online nurseries offer seeds of these plants and other aromatic species. All Columbines are hardy from zones 3 to 9.

Anthemis – Chamomile

Anthemis nobilis



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You are getting very sleepy ...

This spreading ground cover releases a robust, fruity perfume when you walk, roll, line-dance, break-dance, or “do the Hokey-Pokey” on them. This herb is terrific planting along and within pathways or sidewalks – anywhere you can disturb it.

Used in Tudor England, this herb became scented bowling lawns and as a “strewing herb.” The dried and fresh herbal parts, when scattered on the floor or ground and then walked on during public celebrations, released the apple-like fragrance. You can do this the next time you have a dinner party. Your carpeting will look horrible, but the air will be fruity fresh.

The plant produces many small white daisies and when dried as a powder, makes Chamomile tea, reputed to make you sleepy unless reading this ebook does this faster. Considered a groundcover, if the plants get too tall (over six inches - a giant!), clip them back with a lawn-mower. The more disturbed, the better the plants appear to grow. Don't you wish every plant was like this?

Anthemis grows well in full sunlight to partial shade, and fertile soil from zones 4 to 9.

Asclepias – Milkweed

Asclepias syriaca, incarnata



Milking this plant for all its worth.

Another name for these wildflower perennials is 'Butterfly Weed' which attracts many butterflies, especially Monarchs, during the summer. In fact, milkweed is vital for the survival of the Monarch butterfly. It is the food source for their growing caterpillars.

As you might have already surmised, they are weeds, especially in agricultural areas. The plants are durable due to a thick taproot. If you damage a leaf or stem a poisonous, milky white, liquid substance (called latex) oozes out.

The standard *syriaca* species has a fragrance almost like that of vanilla. Another species is the aromatic *incarnata* varieties. **Ice Ballet** has pure white flowers and **Soul Mate** having gorgeous, rose-pink flowers.

All milkweeds thrive in as much sunlight as possible. They are hardy from zones 3 to 9. Be sure to grow a few plants in your garden if only for the sake of the butterflies.

Aster

Aster oblongifolius



Gardening with the stars. You can dance later.

I think there's never a disaster growing an Aster in any garden. Botanists call Asters, Daisies, and Chrysanthemums "composite flowers" for they look to be one large flower but are many smaller ones. More colorful and showy ray flowers surround the central disk of tubular blossoms.

From the Latin word meaning "star," Asters have perennial and annual varieties that bloom in the summer and into fall. If you need an all-purpose, hardy and carefree plant, you cannot go wrong having Asters in your garden.

A recommended variety to grow is **October Skies**. It has become famous for the incredible beauty of the purple-blue daisy-like blossoms which smother the plant in late Summer and throughout the Fall. It is not the flowers but the leaves that have the intense fragrance of peppermint. Wow! Now isn't that something? Handle or brush against the foliage to release the aroma. But, those gorgeous flowers will always steal the show.

This variety grows to only 16 inches tall and is bushy. Like most other Asters, it is attractive to butterflies and makes excellent cut flowers. By all means, plant it with Chrysanthemums for a real rainbow of vivid Fall colors. It is hardy from zones 3 to 8.

Cheiranthus – Wallflowers

Cheiranthus cheiri



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Broccoli with style.

Better known as Wallflowers, these short-lived perennials (related to the Cabbage and Broccoli family) gained prominence in English and

European cottage gardens in years past. Native to southern Europe, they grew in British gardens sometime around 1573. Eventually, they lost out in popularity – I suppose it's due to them being a short-lived perennial.

They are biennials; plants that take two years to bloom. The first year they grow vegetative, then the following spring bloom-like-mad, self-seed and then die. Tragic but unstoppable. A few old historical varieties remain with us, and new hybrids are available each year.

The flower colors range from bright yellow to orange and red striped colors. As with all other fragrant flowers, varieties have differing degrees of perfume. Some have strong scents like a stout, syrupy sweetness. Let's say it is better than overcooked Broccoli!

All Wallflowers thrive in sunlight to light shade and a well-drain, lime-based soil. The height of the varieties averages to around 18 inches tall. They are hardy in zones 5 to 8. They make excellent container subjects for all zones. Seeds are available in garden centers, but rare plant online nurseries offer rare vegetative cultivated varieties.

Chrysanthemum

Chrysanthemum morifolium; Dendratherma morifolium



It's a matter of life and death.

The Orient had cultivated chrysanthemums long before they grew in English gardens, sometime around 1795. They were flowers only for the ruling class. Chinese and Japanese people believe chrysanthemums are a symbol of the sun, perfection and a healthy, prosperous, long life. The Japanese emperors even sat on chrysanthemum-covered thrones. A long life to their royal rear ends I would guess. The rulers forbid the lower-class poor people to grow them in their gardens under the penalty of death. Italians also consider chrysanthemums associated

with mortality or with bad luck. I think not. Mafia, yes... but mums – never!

Not only glowing with beautiful colors, some varieties also have a fragrance. The scent is herbal-pungent but refreshing! Plant them in the spring, and you have just guaranteed yourself a colorful fall. They are also excellent for containers and boatloads of cut flowers.

Grow all mums in full sunlight if possible. Most are hardy from zones 4 to 10 depending on the variety. I recommend growing **Emperor of China** which has seashell-pink, double petals. Each petal is in the quill or spoon shape classification. The inner petals are an intense pink, but the outer ones become light pink to white. The leaves turn a bronze color in chilly weather. When smelling this mum, I sense a sweet, lemony cake frosting scent. It blooms in October and makes an excellent container subject for northern gardens.

Convallaria – Lily of the Valley

Convallaria majalis



Mary, Mary quite contrary ...

This perfumed ground cover plant has been a favorite for countless generations and is the subject of many legends. Many cultures say the pure white flowers represent sweetness, purity, chastity, and love. These representations help explain why a bouquet of them is attractive for May weddings since the flowers are naturally blooming then.

They also became a symbol of the Virgin Mary. Its other name (though rarely mentioned) is "Our Lady's Tears," and the flowers have appeared in many paintings of Mary over the centuries. Rumor has it they grew where Mary's tears hit the ground under the cross of Jesus. Hey, that's

good press for a spring blooming groundcover! The only bad news is a word of caution for all parts of the plant are very poisonous if eaten. Just enjoy the unique fragrance of the bell-shaped, white blossoms!

The plants are hardy from zones 2 to 9 and grow in part to full shade in moist, loamy soil. Many garden centers offer bare root “pips” or shoots in the spring.

Dianthus – Carnations and Pinks

Dianthus caryophyllus and species



A flower you can't refuse.

These plants are colorful and fragrant perennials ideal for planting in front of beds, borders, and containers. The word Dianthus means flower-of-the-gods or god-flower. It is god-flower, not Godfather!

Many traditional varieties of historical importance are still available. Some are several years old and will continue to live by loving gardeners willing to propagate them. They are also living histories; what stories those petals could tell!

They are easy to grow, and most bloom in the late spring and early summer for about one month. They are very fragrant of clove, lilac,

sweet vanilla or clover. Let your eyes enjoy the kaleidoscope of colors but let your nose savor those great perfumes.

Plant them in full sunlight and limy soil. It is crucial the soil is well-drained. Height is less than two feet tall, and they are hardy from zones 4 to 9.

Recommended species and varieties to grow are **Duchess of Westminster**, which is an antique carnation from the late 19th century. It is one of a few types called **Victorian Malmaison Carnations**, which are very rare. **Mrs. Sinkins** is the sought after 19th-century variety (around 1868) well praised for the sweet perfume it releases into the air. The English garden writer, Christopher Lloyd, described her (the carnation, mind you) as "*a terrible old slut, invariably bursting her calyx, but with an airborne scent surpassing all others.*" Please calm down, Mr. Lloyd. This variety can look very untidy but with having an outstanding perfume who cares how she looks!

Cutting-grown types are challenging to find. Try an internet search and, I hope, you can locate them. England would be the most likely location for these rare plants, but Customs regulations will be the problem if you need to import them.

Don't overlook our modern carnations for they have a longer blooming, fragrant, and colorful variations.

Dictamnus – Rose Gas Plant

Dictamnus fraxinella



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Three-alarm blaze now in progress.

Here is a plant with a few other names such as 'Fraxinella,' 'Dittany,' 'Lemon Bush,' and 'Burning Bush.' The names reflect specific characteristics of this plant. It was an old cottage garden favorite but, sadly, is now less known. Times change and people change, and no flower remains a constant favorite.

It is a vigorous growing, bushy plant with three-foot-tall spikes of Alstroemeria-like flowers that are deep rose pink with deeper veins. The blossoms, stems, and leaves produce a volatile oil (gas) smelling of a strong lemon or citrus perfume. On warm, still, dark summer evenings when the invisible gas surrounds the plant a lit match will

ignite it into a flash of blue flame. That's the theory; it never worked for me. I do not consider myself that desperate for engaging in "botanical pyromania" so I will not try it again. Just enjoy that lemon perfume and those beautiful flowers!

This plant provides excellent cut flowers and is very hardy from zones 3 to 9. It is happy to grow in full to partial sunlight and fertile, well-drained soil.

Echinacea – Coneflower

Echinacea purpurea



How do you smell a hedgehog? Very carefully!

Coneflowers are big, sturdy daisies blooming throughout the summer. They are very hardy and make an excellent cut flower for bouquets. They are also butterfly "magnets", for they seem to attract all the butterflies in the neighborhood.

Years ago, they were your basic native wildflower until someone thought "I can make them more beautiful" and it happened. Plant breeders created new varieties with exciting colors and fragrances not found in older types. Many new varieties provide a light to moderate sweet scent while others have an incredible orange pekoe tea perfume

– such as from the variety, **Orange Meadowbrite**. Yes, they smell like Lipton tea bags!

One important safety note is to be careful when smelling the flowers. The central cone bristles are prickly to the nose. Yes, it hurts! The name of Echinacea comes from the Greek “echinos” meaning hedgehog for the spiky center cone of the flowers.

They are carefree and thrive in the hot sun, dry soil, and, for a short period, wet ground. They are hardy from zones 3 to 10.

Hemerocallis – Daylily

Hemerocallis flava and hybrids



"The award for outstanding fragrance goes to ..."

There must be thousands of daylily varieties growing in gardens throughout the world. All vary in color and size but rarely is flower fragrance mentioned (as usual). The scent is difficult to describe; sweet but also a little rank. Each year, a new variety is the recipient of the L. Ernest Plouf Award for having an excellent scent. Not as popular as the Emmy or the Academy Awards but, to a daylily breeder, it must evoke suspense and thrill.

Hemerocallis, in Greek translation, means "day beauty" for each flower lasts only one day, but the overall plant bloom-time can last several

weeks. They grow over three feet tall (with the flower stalks), and they grow best in full sunlight. They are hardy from zones 3 to 10.

Research past recipients of the Plouf Award to find fragrant varieties. For now, locate the species called the **Old Fashion Lemon Daylily** (*Hemerocallis flava*). This species has four-inch blossoms of bright yellow. The Easter lily perfume of each flower is outstanding. It blooms early in the season for daylilies – middle of May and continues until the end of June. This species was one of the first daylilies introduced into gardens. Although the flowers bloom in the late afternoon, they release the heavenly perfume in the early evening air and well into the night.

Hosta

Hosta plantaginea



It pays to be fashionably late.

What would a garden be like without these outstanding shade-loving plants? The first mention of a Hosta plant was by Dutch traders touring Japan around 1712. It was not included in the tourist brochures for it took over 200 years before it became more well-known and appreciated. Talk about being late to the garden party!

Hostas are one of the popular perennials grown today. One of the first Hostas species to come into general garden use was *Hosta plantaginea* for the large, white flowers are super fragrant. The perfume is like

Easter Lilies. The nickname of **Old August Lily** reflects the time it blooms.

Plant Hostas in partial sunlight (morning sun is best) to shade. Height is three feet tall for the flower stalks. Most varieties are hardy from zones 3 to 9.

A few recommended varieties of the plantaginea species to find and grow include **Royal Standard**, a mutation with large variegated leaves. Many garden centers offer this outstanding plant. Another related variety, **Aphrodite**, discovered in China several years ago, is a double-flowered version and is one of the rarest and most sought-after of all Hostas. The large, double petals are pure white and have a stunning Easter Lily perfume. It's unique, expensive, but beautiful both in sight and smell when it blooms. If you find it – latch on to it for your garden!

Hyacinthus – Hyacinth

Hyacinthus orientalis



Don't become a friend of Apollo.

One spring day, in ancient Greece, a boy named Hyacinth played with his best friend, the god Apollo. They played a game similar to throwing a Frisbee and catching it. Here, it was one of those hard discus things. Yes, an accident just waiting to happen. And it occurred when Hyacinth was conked on the head by the discus and died.

According to ancient Athens police and CSI investigation reports when Hyacinth's blood and Apollo's tears combined a beautiful and fragrant flower arose from the ground. Apollo, in anguish, kept it (or hid evidence) as a remembrance of his friend.

The large flowers we now recognize are the popular Dutch Hyacinth bulbs. There are several varieties with many colors, but they all have a heady, sweet perfume. Some people love or dislike them due to that overpowering fragrance, especially noticed in an enclosed room.

Plant hyacinth bulbs outdoors in the fall or in pots for forcing indoors to enjoy in mid to late winter. Most Hyacinth bulbs are hardy from zones 4 to 8, but adding mulch is a better protection against the cold. Many garden centers offer several colorful varieties of these bulbs in early Autumn.

Iris

Iris germanica



The rainbow connection.

Iris, the Greek Goddess of Rainbows and the messenger of the gods, also had the duty of leading the souls of dead women to the Elysian Fields. I hope she had time to take the kids to soccer practice with all this multitasking going on. Ancient Greeks would leave Iris flowers on the graves of women. This method made sure the dear departed had confirmed reservations for Goddess Iris to take them to Paradise.

The flower became known as the 'Fleur de Lis' or "Flower of Light" in ancient Rome. Then it became famous as a royal symbol of French kings, Spanish nobility, the Province of Quebec, Canada, Boy Scouts of

America and the New Orleans Saints football team. From the Elysian Fields to a football field this beautiful flower has had an impressive history.

The flowers have a unique shape, but several lack a fragrance. There are many varieties available to the home gardener. Most of these varieties are Large Bearded Iris or **German Iris** (*Iris germanica*). Botanists call them bearded due to the prominent fuzzy-fluffy yellow or orange hairs on the inner petals. Fragrance varies from nothing to outstanding. Do a “nose test” when they bloom. Those varieties that are fragrant have a grape soda or grape candy scent.

Many garden centers and nurseries have several colorful varieties available. How about growing **Immortality**? The petals unfold as a light, powder blue but change to pure white. The fuzzy, yellow hairs on them add a beautiful touch. Its fragrance is super sweet; less of a grape scent but more sweetness. It is also a re-bloomer; it tends to re-flower later in the summer.

Batik (shown above) is a stunning royal purple with stripes, splashes, and splotches of white. No two blooms are alike except for the excellent fragrance. This one is unique and a definite keeper for your garden!

The **Florentine Iris** (*Iris florentina*) - also called **Orris Root**, is an ancient species popular for the dried, powdery rhizome or the woody stem. This fine powder gives off an enjoyable violet perfume once used for potpourri and outhouse (privy) air fresheners. That’s nice, but Glade air fresheners can do the same thing today for your modern indoor outhouse. The large, light blue and white flowers have an incredible grape-violet perfume. It is difficult to find but look for it.

Grow Iris in full sunlight well-drained, soil. The height of the flower stems may reach 3 feet tall and will bloom in the late spring or early summer for about one month. All are hardy from zones 3 to 9. Check your local garden centers for modern varieties. Online nurseries specializing in Iris offer more selections, list which ones are fragrant, and those that are rare.

Lavandula – Lavender

Lavandula angustifolia



The socially acceptable thing to use.

You cannot help having a huge smile on your face after inhaling the fresh bouquet from these essential herbs. Ages ago, people used Lavender as a perfume since no one took baths. Sewage always polluted the water, so no one drank it, bathed in it or washed clothes in it. So, what was a smelly, dirty person to do? People could become “socially acceptable” by using the oil of lavender. The glorious scent was (and still is) used in many products needing a warm, long lasting and pleasing aroma.

Lavender loves hot, dry, gravelly areas. Please, don't pamper these plants with fertilizer and regular watering. Fewer amounts will go a long way in providing healthy, hardy and happy plants. All are hardy from zones 5 to 9. Grow them in full sunlight with well-drained, limestone-enriched soil.

Two excellent varieties to grow are **Grosso** and **Provence Lavender**. These types are important in the perfume fields of the Grosso and Provence Valleys of France. The other name of the Grosso variety is "**Fat Spike**." It is not a street gang nickname but refers to the large, plump flower spikes. The blossom color of both varieties is dark violet, and the foliage is a silvery green.

You can find these variations and others in many garden centers and mail-order nurseries. Why travel to France to see and smell these enjoyable plants when they can grow in your garden? Then again, WHY NOT? Let's get packing! Visiting France is one of the socially acceptable things to do.

Lilium – Lily

Lilium hybrids



Consider the lilies of the field.

No fragrance garden is complete without the dependable Lily. Based on artwork from ancient cultures, they had a close relationship with us since 1600 B.C. The Greeks and Romans valued them as fertility symbols. Mentioned in the Bible, they symbolize purity, chastity, and honor. Is there any question why a pure white lily symbolizes the resurrection of Christ at Easter time?

Plant the bulbs in the early spring or fall. Even a potted Easter lily can grow outdoors. Many Lilies are not fragrant, but the choice ones for fragrance are the **Oriental Lily** varieties. They typically have large, very

colorful flowers. A recommended older variety to grow is **Stargazer** (pictured above) and found in many garden centers. There are also hybrid varieties made from crosses with the Easter lily.

Most bulbs are hardy from zones 4 to 9. They prefer to grow in full to part sun and fertile, well-drained soil.

Lupinus – Lupin or Lupine

Lupinus polyphyllus



How to teach an old wolf new tricks.

We have a problem here. Is Lupin spelled with the letter “e” or not? It depends on where you live. In North America, it does, but for the rest of the world, it does not. I like Lupin better since many people pronounce it as loo-pin.

The Latin words lupin and lupus mean wolf or wolf-like behavior. People once considered the wild Lupin plants as a botanical wolf. Wolves often stole the sheep from shepherds, so wild Lupin were horrible weeds that took over land better used for valuable crops. Today, like all members of the pea-bean family, farmers consider them

useful in improving soil fertility. Think of a big, bad wolf changing into a dog like Lassie.

Over time, these plants became famous all over the world. One day, in the early 1900s, a British man by the name of George Russell, had an epiphany. You know – a light bulb above his head, brilliant idea. He thought Lupins looked “splendidly lovely” but could look better. He eventually made the famous **Russell Lupins** after spending many years cross-breeding different types. They are very colorful but also have a surprising peanut or almond scent. On one hot summer day, I smelled peanut butter – creamy, not chunky.

Lupins are very reliable growers and prefer sun to part shade, and acidic soil to grow well. They are hardy from zones 4 to 9 and bloom in mid-summer. Look for the favorite **Popsicle Strain** in seed catalogs for they have vivid colors and sturdier stalks that do not need staking.

Lycoris – Naked Ladies

Lycoris squamigera



Time to peruse the latest gardening issue of Playboy.

All right, gentlemen. It's not what you think. However, you can have fun with your friends by saying, "Come on over to see the naked ladies in my garden!" Won't they be surprised! This nickname is one of the

several common names for this bulb. The other names are Surprise Lily, Magic Lily, and Resurrection Lily. Growers give them these nicknames because the flower stalks grow out of the ground in late summer before the leaves develop.

It may surprise you to see them blooming since the stems blend in well with other plants. The bulbs bloom for nearly three weeks. After that, they form seeds, then die back to the ground. Here today – gone tomorrow. About a week or two later, the leaves will emerge and grow. They stay this way over the fall and winter. By late spring, they die back, and the bulbs go dormant until late-summer. Then, the cycle begins again. These plants must be from an alternate universe!

It is important not to disturb these bulbs. Plant and forget them except for fertilizing and watering when they are in growth. Don't dig them up or transplant them! They are hardy in zones 4 to 11 and love to grow in full to partial sunlight and well-drained soil.

As for fragrance – I must confess – I forgot to smell these flowers! I saw them, took photos, and admired their beauty. For my neglect, I researched what other gardeners thought of the scent. Many people say the flowers are sweetly fragrant while others swear they smell like a natural gas leak. If I smelled this near my house, I would curse too.

Mentha – Mints

Mentha piperita and related species



The Hells Angels have arrived.

Mints are the ‘wild ones’ of the plant world. These herbs enjoy the fast life, carefree and relaxed. They don’t care where they roam for they’re tough, daring and aggressive. This description may sound like a motorcycle gang, but we have grown these tenacious herbs in gardens for a long time.

They will grow willy-nilly everywhere if not confined, so please don’t plant them near your prized perennials. Plant them in those problematic growing areas where you do not mind where they will spread.

They are the perfect perfumed groundcover plants when touched, walked on or brushed against with your foot. The fragrances are soothing yet excitable, and their leaves can help flavor foods, desserts, and drinks.

Plant them in full sunlight to shade, wet soil, dry soil, rich or poor ground, who knows –radioactive contaminated soil – it doesn't matter! They will grow where they want to grow. As expected, they are hardy to almost all growing zones on Earth and Mars.

One recommended variety to grow (only because I have a sweet tooth) is **Chocolate Mint**. Sorry, it does not smell like a Hershey bar but is a variety of **Peppermint**. It smells like those yummy chocolate covered thin mint patties. The foliage is a deep green with a slight bronze cast. If they had foil wrappings, it would be even better! There is a slew of other name-scented varieties such as **Apple, Pineapple, Orange, and Spearmint** (*Mentha spicata*).

Monarda – Bergamont

Monarda didyma



Can't find the name brand product? Go with something generic.

This plant is native to the eastern half of North America and has familiar names such as Bee Balm and Oswego Tea. For you history buffs, wild Monarda became an emergency tea substitute after the colonists in Boston had that wild costume party the night of December 16, 1773. They dumped all the chests of Earl Grey tea into Boston Harbor. The next morning, when they simmered down and realized they were without tea, the Bostonians had to make-do with something... anything (other than coffee) ... for a caffeine fix. Somehow, out of tea-junkie desperation, someone discovered this plant could make a half-decent orange flavored tea.

These are bold looking perennial plants, related to the mints with large and colorful flowers. The flowers lack a scent, but the leaves have a robust minty-orange fragrance. They enjoy full sunlight to part shade to grow and bloom well. Their hardiness is from zones 3 to 10.

There are many varieties, but **Jacob Cline** is one of the largest of the bright red types with outstanding mildew disease resistance. The magnificent, large, red flowers are incredible to see. It is one of the most famous of the red-flowered varieties which bloom all summer. It also is a magnet to attract all the hummingbirds and butterflies in your neighborhood.

This plant and other Monarda varieties are available at your local garden center. When visiting rare plant nurseries, look for the rare **Rose Scented Monarda**. The hot sun releases a strong rose perfume from the leaves.

Narcissus – Daffodils



Check to make sure your life insurance is paid up.

In ancient Greece mythology, Echo, a sweet, young nymph fell madly in love with a guy named Narcissus. The trouble was, he loved himself even more. He considered himself as one irresistible, handsome dude. One day, he told Echo to get lost. Brokenhearted, Echo banished herself into the mountains. There she died – but only her voice remained.

Narcissus did not fare well either for he saw his reflection in a pool of water, tried to embrace it, fell in, discovered he could not swim and drowned. What an idiot! Rumor has it, the Greek Underworld couldn't stand him, so they pushed him out of the ground as a flower. Maybe someone would love him that way. That flower is what we now call a

daffodil. Their beauty inspired William Wordsworth to compose a poem when he saw a host of golden daffodils swaying in a breeze.

As for fragrance, the range goes from none to earthy sweet to ultra, sickeningly sweet. As with all members of the Narcissus family, Autumn is the time to plant these bulbs. We can force many daffodils indoors in pots for mid-winter enjoyment.

There is a vast assortment of daffodils (and the smaller-flowered varieties call Narcissus) available every fall in garden centers and online. Grow in full to partial sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil. They are outstanding for naturalizing in lawns and woodlands.

Nymphaea – Water Lily

Nymphaea odorata



Pretty as an impressionistic picture.

"I'm good for nothing except painting and gardening," French painter, Claude Monet once said. Did you know his work called *"Water Lilies"* is not just one oil painting but almost 250? Critics (along with the public) scored this work and others. There's always a critic lurking nearby.

Monet grew several water lilies in his famous gardens and each year painted them in various poses. I guess you can say they were floral nudes. He LOVED them! Most water lilies he raised (and now us) belong to semi-hardy hybrid varieties of the genus *Nymphaea*. Others belong to more tropical species.

All types grow in water – gee, what a surprise – and their roots and crowns need protection from being frozen. That could be very tricky especially in northern areas.

They come in many outstanding colors, and many have light to strong fragrances ranging from almonds, spices, roses, lemons, and fruits. Think of them as water-growing peonies. Most of the perfume occurs in the early evening right after the petals fully open, but a few releases the scent during the day.

There are so many varieties to choose from, but it is best to buy them from a specialist nursery. Here, you can find which ones are hardier (zones 5 to 10) and fragrant to your area. One recommended variety (which authorities feel Monet grew himself) is **James Brydon** – a stunner with large, prolific, rosy-red, semi-double blooms with vivid yellow stamens. Plus – they smell of ripe apples! If Claude grew this plant – so should you.

Oenothera – Evening Primrose

Oenothera odorata, pallida, glazioviana



The life of the party.

Naturalized all over the world, many people consider these plants weeds. Some species bloom during the day while others in the evening and overnight. It is these night bloomers that have a sweet perfume, enjoyable for all us night critters.

All these plants grow well in sunlight to part shade and fertile, well-drained soil. Most species are hardy from zones 4 to 9.

A few recommended varieties to grow in the garden include **Fragrant Oenothera** (*Oenothera odorata*) having a delightful blend of large, yellow-pink-orange flowers. All colors are present, just like a sunset,

releasing a gorgeous honeysuckle-lemon perfume into the air. Oh, what a pleasure to smell these blossoms on warm summer evenings!

The star of “The Evening Primrose Show” belongs to **Tina James** **Magical Evening Primrose** (*Oenothera glazioviana*). Years ago, a garden writer by the name of Tina James popularized this very delightful plant. According to rumor, she hosted Evening Primrose parties showcasing its beautiful flowers. In the evening, the large, yellow flowers slowly open (like in time-lapse photography) right before your eyes. I have watched the flowers open at 8:30 pm and ten minutes later they were fully open. No fooling! The blossoms exude a bedazzling lemon, lily and honeysuckle blended perfume.

The plant grows to nearly four feet tall with hundreds of flowers over the summer so plan a party each evening. Your neighbors may think you are crazy (true gardeners are) staring at this plant each evening. Forget about watching television reruns, for the best show to watch is here in your garden.

Paeonia – Peony

Paeonia lactiflora hybrids



I hereby bequeath all my worldly possessions to my surviving peonies.

These gorgeous plants do not need an introduction since gardeners have treasured them for generations. There are many recorded

instances where they can outlive the people who plant them thus growing with the future generations of a person's family.

Noted for their large and billowy flowers on leafy stems, all bloom in late spring to early summer. They also need a cold time (winter), which stimulates flower buds to form. Many varieties of peonies have different fragrances such as lemons, roses, honey, spices, and musk. Sometimes, a type may smell of dead fish. Do extensive research before purchasing any peony, so you don't get something fishy.

A few varieties to grow are **Felix Crousse** which is a classic French peony introduced to America around 1881. It has bright red-pink petals with an unusual silvery sheen. To my nose, it has a sweet, lemony fragrance. Another praised peony is **Duchess de Nemours** with huge, fluffy white petals with the center ones tipped in bright red. My goodness is she beautiful! This noble lady will bloom from early May to early June, and her perfume is like that of Damask roses.

Plant all peonies in the sunshine and well-drained soil. They are hardy from zones 3 to 8. Almost all garden centers have peonies available as bare roots or grown in containers.

Phlox – Garden and Woodland Phlox

Phlox paniculata and divaricata



Not a spineless group of flowers.

The Garden Phlox is an extensive and diverse group of plants. Professional landscapers considered them as “the backbone of a perennial garden” due to their hardiness, long blooming, and very colorful flower displays. One feature not noted is their fragrance. I guess that’s not a high priority. They have an aroma that resembles peanut butter, almonds or some other warm, nutty scent.

Garden Phlox needs plenty of sunlight, fertile soil and good drainage to grow well. Plant height, on average, is above three feet tall. Garden Phlox blooms midsummer to fall and are hardy from zones 3 to 9.

There are so many recommended varieties to grow, but **David** represents the best white garden phlox and possibly THE BEST Phlox – period. It has large, pure white flowers that are also highly fragrant of almonds or peanuts (in my nasal opinion).

This variety has excellent disease resistance, so you do not have to spray chemicals on the leaves. It blooms mid to late summer and is excellent for an evening fragrance garden. Many landscapers feel this phlox is the best to grow – and I agree with them! There are many other colorful and fragrant varieties ‘out there’. Let your eyes and nose help you find them.



The other common name for the **Woodland Phlox** (*Phlox divaricata*) is Wild Sweet Williams but don't confuse this with the similar nickname of *Dianthus barbatus*. This country wildflower became a big city garden “scent-sation.” It blooms from mid-spring to early summer with hundreds of light blue or white flowers. They are lily-perfumed and if

you clump all the flowers together with your hands and inhale – you will be in seventh heaven. What a way to celebrate spring!

It requires fertile, damp but not constant wet soil and slowly spreads on the ground by underground stems. It loves its rural, woodland setting as compared to the more cosmopolitan summer blooming relative mentioned above.

This phlox is hardy from zones 3 to 8. Plant it in partial shade and moist, loamy soil for best blooming and growth. Look for the variety called **Blue Moon** which has a slightly deeper blue flower color and bushier growth. It makes a splendid, colorful, and highly fragrant groundcover.

Saponaria – Bouncing Bet

Saponaria officinalis alba plena



Just in case you run out of Tide detergent.

What a strange name for a plant! This European wildflower has a muddled history as far back to Medieval days or even earlier. It is a beautiful perennial related to the Dianthus or carnation family and is a terrific bloomer from mid to late summer until a killing frost. Clustered together, the single or double flowers are rosy pink or snow white. They have an incredible grape soda or Concord grape perfume.

Another fascinating feature is the leaves form soapsuds when you crush and rub them with your hands in water. The Latin name of 'saponaria' means 'relating to soap' or 'soap making.' Museums did (and some still

do) use the leaves to produce soap suds for washing delicate or irreplaceable fabric material. If you need a quick hand-wash pluck a few leaves, crunch them up, add a little water and presto – instant hand soap.

The plants slowly spread and grow to over two feet tall, thriving in the sunshine to partial shade, and fertile, well-drained soil. They are exceptionally hardy from zones 3 to 9.

Saponaria still keeps its wildflower heritage by being invasive, but not too aggressive, and controlled by the downward thrust of a sharp spade. Yes, that sounds horrible, but sometimes we have to practice 'tough love' on some overactive plants. It tolerates dry soil conditions and has few if any, insect or disease problems. No wonder, for the bugs doesn't want soap in their little mouths!

A recommended variety (which is the species only dressed-up) has double-petaled white flowers. It is unable to form seeds, so you have to propagate it by cuttings. The magnified grape fragrance is due to the extra set of petals.

This perennial is rare to find; I have not found a garden center that sells it. An Internet search of rare-plant nurseries should be your method to locate this plant. Overall, this plant is worth growing and enjoying!

Tanacetum – Costmary or Bible Leaf

Tanacetum balsamita or *Chrysanthemum balsamita*



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Praise the Lord and my bookmark.

There is confusion on what to name this plant. It does not grow or look like a “mum” so why it is in the same Latin classification? Oh, no matter; we will let the botanists fight over naming it. Easily overlooked, it is a rather dull plant. It has large leaves, rarely flowers and sort of creeps along the ground.

So, what makes this a special plant? It’s those leaves. They are bright green and intensely scented of spearmint when you handle them. This ‘claim to fame’ goes way back throughout history. This herb was known

to the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, barbarians and throughout the Middle Ages. During this time, they called it **Costmary**.

Then the Puritans, in the 1600s, called it **Bible Leaf**. This name refers to its usage by parishioners as a bookmark. They would use the large leaves not only to mark a page in the Bible but also to use a leaf as a stimulant to wake themselves up during rather dull and endless sermons. By rubbing a leaf under the nose, the heavenly minty aroma will open your eyes in an instant. Today, people use the dried leaves as an ingredient in potpourri and brewed as a strong mint tea. I guess today's church sermons are more invigorating.

This plant loves to grow in full sunlight to partial shade, adaptable to many soils and it is hardy to most growing zones. Can I get a hallelujah? It grows to about one foot tall and slowly spreads out along the ground.

To get this plant – locate specialty herb nurseries in your area or online. So sayeth the Lord, Amen.

Trifolium – Red Clover

Trifolium pratense



Even a weed can be extraordinary.

Gardeners consider Red Clover a weed. Grow weeds in the garden? Yes. Please calm down. Technically, a weed is a misplaced plant growing where not wanted. The plant has lost its way. To solve this dilemma means to rip, hoe, and stamp it out. You want it out – period.

White Clover is more of a nuisance in lawns but helps soil fertility. Red Clover is a taller, more sturdy plant worthy of adding to a fragrance or butterfly garden. Growing as a short-lived perennial, this plant will not be invasive in your garden.

The flower-heads are a beautiful purple/red while the stems have three leaflets each having an attractive white "V-shape" pattern.

Red Clover is beautiful and fragrant, having that unique perfume of its own. Hardy from zones 4 to 9, raise the plant in full to partial sunshine and well-drained soil. The neighborhood bees and butterflies will love you if you grow this poor, neglected plant.

Easy to grow from seed, many companies that specialize in selling wildflowers or agricultural seed should have this species available. I have never seen nursery plants offered to gardeners.

Tulipa – Tulips

Tulipa hybrida



Eureka! There are tulips in them thar hills!

Tulips originated in the Middle East and became a must-have item. Poets and artists praised their beauty. If television were around HGTV would sell them.

In western Europe, this fascination became a status symbol addiction. Wealthy people purchased tulips to impress their friends. Those friends had to impress their friends and so on down the line.

This craze hit its peak in a period around 1634 to 1637. It became known as the age of Tulipmania. It was something like the California Gold Rush but, instead of gold fever, people got tulip fever. They wanted

to grow, invest, sell, buy, cheat and steal tulip bulbs. Several people sold their houses to afford one or two bulbs! They quickly made fortunes and eventually lost when reasonable people asked, "Are we crazy? Wake up, people!"

Tulipmania ended, and they became ordinary spring blooming flowers. A few enterprising people in Holland knew they were still a good thing and continued to grow and sell them. Today, selling tulips and other spring-blooming bulbs (as Fall purchased bulbs and as florist bouquets), is a multi-billion-dollar industry. Who knew such a beautiful flower could cause such historical excitement?

Concerning fragrance, tulips have a light, sweet, "warm" aroma. The early blooming varieties have a stronger scent. Look for the rare type called **Prince of Austria** for it has an orange blossom perfume.

As with all the other spring-flowering bulbs, plant tulips in the fall. They prefer as much sunlight as possible, and – this is important – well-drained, sandy or gravel-based soil. Tulips hate constant moist or wet soil. When they go dormant in the summer, the underground bulbs prefer to be dry. They love drought conditions!

You can force early blooming varieties indoors in containers for winter pleasure.

Valeriana – Valerian

Valeriana officinalis



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Roots for euphoric kitty cats and rats.

Valerian is one of those ‘cure-all’ types of herbs that have had a long history with man. It is native to Europe and West Asia but has become naturalized throughout North America. This herb (reputedly) is a gentle tranquilizer to reduce stress or to aid sleep. People have applied the roots to scent linen, but the smell is not attractive to some people.

The many, tiny white to light pink flowers are in clusters atop a stalk which can reach to about five feet tall. A common name for this plant is Garden Heliotrope – not to be confused with the fragrant annual Heliotrope. Valerian blooms in the early summer for nearly a month with a delicious vanilla aroma. Some people believe it to have an

unpleasant musky odor. Go figure! Try doing a nose-test if you see blooming plants in a garden center.

The plants spread outward over time with underground stems. The beautiful leaves are light green and resemble fern fronds. They grow best in sunlight to part shade, fertile, moist soil, and are hardy from zones 4 to 9.

Finally, for many years, there is a belief the smell of the roots attracts cats. They will roll around with feline ecstasy if they (or you) dig up part of a root. Rats are (supposedly) gleefully drawn to the roots. Homeowners used slices of the roots as bait to lure a happy rat to a trap. I never want to encounter a euphoric rat.

Viola – Violets, Violas and Pansy

Viola odorata, Viola cornuta



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No strings attached.

How these small, cultivated spring violets can release such a potent, sweet perfume is a wonder of gardening. Unfortunately, most of the native wildflowers are scentless. Many of the larger Violas (Pansy) have a lightly sweet fragrance.

To experience a mind-boggling, wowzer perfume always try to get and grow the Viola odorata varieties including the very rare **Parma Double Violets**. These include **Comte de Brazza** (a double white); **Duchess de Parme** (light lavender color) and **Marie Louise** (deep purple-blue).

The Parma violets are tender perennials and are only hardy from zones 7 to 9. Northern gardeners should protect them exceptionally well or pot them up for the winter. They are sterile and can only be propagated by cuttings or runners.

Other varieties to grow are **Queen Charlotte** which is one of the most beautiful dark blue, long-stemmed, single petal violets available. **Rosina** is a light pinkish-red. These are hardy from zones 4 to 9. Don't be surprised if these varieties self-seed and you find new violet plants springing up everywhere in your garden. Don't weed them out – embrace the fragrant Violets!



Another recommended variety of Violas to grow is **Rebecca** (*Viola cornuta* shown above). According to several nurseries and garden writers, this is the best bicolor blue variety with a scent that is “positively intoxicating,” as one writer herald in a gardening article. Or was it an intoxicated writer named Harold? I’m not sure, but other

writers agree it is one of the most potent scented *Viola cornuta* varieties available. Plus, it's so darn pretty!

This species is hardy from zones 5 to 9 and blooms spring to early summer and possibly again in the fall.

Grow these plants in partly shaded borders and containers with fertile, moist, but not sopping wet soil. Most garden centers offer the *Viola cornuta* and Pansy varieties more than the *odorata* types. Try online sources to find the rare Parma Violets.

Conclusion

Grow yourself some happiness!

This ebook has only scratched the surface on what fragrant perennial plants and bulbs you can grow in your garden. There are many more varieties – old and new – that you can grow in your flower beds and borders.

New varieties of plants are pushing aside older varieties. These older forms are in danger of being forgotten. Let's try to prevent this from happening. If you love a particular plant, try to learn how to propagate it. By doing so, you keep it alive and, if you have gardening friends or relatives, you can expand its growth into new areas. Be generous and share your plants – and your love of beauty.

Thank you for reading this ebook.

I hope you have enjoyed learning something new about fragrant perennial plants and bulbs. I have two other companion ebooks on fragrance gardening. They are part of *The Scent of Your Garden* series. I entitle one, *Fragrant Annuals and Bulbs*, and the other is *Fragrant Trees, Shrubs, and Vines*.

Please visit my author website at <https://gedwinvarner.com> for my other gardening ebooks and contact information.

About the Author

G. Edwin Varner grew up on a farm helping his father in the crop fields and assisting his mother in the flower and vegetable gardens. This early experience and learning led him to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with a minor in Botany.

For twenty years he successfully owned and operated a fragrant flower mail-order nursery. Unlike most mail-order nurseries, which publish colorful but expensive pictorial catalogs, his frugal catalog extensively described the flowers he grew. He once said, "I write a thousand words worth a picture in my catalogs." Today, he has the same writing style (thankfully with fewer words) across a variety of enjoyable and informative ebooks. This time, the ebooks include color photos of each flower.

He encourages you to cultivate something unique and beautiful in your gardens. His motto is "read about it, see it, grow it, and enjoy it!"

G. Edwin Varner lives in a rural area of northeastern Ohio, USA.